

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 203811
ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /011 R

66011
DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:MACASEY:DWL
APPROVED BY NEA/ARN:WNHOWELL
-----058381 112152Z /61
O 112027Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO USINT BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 7726

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 203811

FOL RPT DAMASCUS 4603 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN
BEIRUT BAGHDAD CAIRO JERUSALEM JIDDA KUWAIT TEL AVIV
SECDEF DIA AUG11, 1978

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4603

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PEPR, PLO, IZ
SUBJECT: FATAH WANTS TO EVEN THE SCORE WITH IRAQ

1. FUNERAL FOR PLO PARIS REP IZZIDIN QALAQ HERE ON AUGUST 6
WAS A LARGE AND EMOTIONAL AFFAIR. TURNOUT OF SYRIAN AND
PLO OFFICIALS AND ORDINARY PALESTINIANS INCLUDING CONTINGENTS
FROM THE CAMPS WAS SO LARGE THAT POLICE HAD TO LIMIT NUMBER
OF VEHICLES PERMITTED TO MOVE IN THE FUNERAL CORTEGE WHICH
SOME ESTIMATED WOULD HAVE OTHERWISE STRETCHED 2-3 KILOMETERS.
SEVERAL PERSONS HAVE INFORMED US THAT WHEN ARAFAT ARRIVED
IN THE COMPANY OF SAIQA LEADER ZUHAIR MUHSIN AT THE MOWASSET
HOSPITAL TO LEAD THE CORTEGE, SYRIAN SECURITY OFFICERS
SNAPPED TO ATTENTION AND SALUTED SMARTLY IN CONTRAST TO THE
PERFUNCTORY WAY THEY RESPONDED TO THEIR OWN LEADERS INCLUDING
VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COMMANDS OF
THE BAATH PARTY WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ASSAD HIMSELF WHO WAS
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REPRESENTED BY BAATH PARTY DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL ABDALLAH
AHMAR. AN EQUALLY IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TURNED OUT
THE FIRST NIGHT TO PAY CONDOLENCE CALLS ON QULAQ'S FAMILY.

2. ANOTHER FUNERAL IS CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS HERE TODAY,
AUGUST 10, FOR ONE OF THOSE SLAIN IN THE ATTACK ON THE PLO'S
ISLAMABAD OFFICE. THE SYRIANS HAVE EVIDENTLY PROVIDED

BUSES FOR A LARGE NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS, FEDAYEEN, AND REFUGEES TO BE TRANSPORTED TO THE CEMETERY AND CLOSED THE FUNERAL ROUTE TO TRAFFIC. MEANWHILE, THE SYRIAN PRESS EXPLOITS THE FATAH-IRAQI CLASHES, CLAIMING THAT THE IRAQIS ARE COOPERATING WITH ZIONISM, IMPERIALISM, AND OTHER ENEMIES OF THE PALESTINIANS.

3. AFTER THE FUNERAL, ABD AL-RAZZAK YAHIA, PLO POLITICAL DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR GENERAL, WHO IS QALAQ'S FIRST COUSIN, TOLD PALESTINIAN SOURCE THAT THE FIGHT WITH IRAQ HAD TO STOP BECAUSE IT WAS CLAIMING THE LIVES OF TOO MANY GOOD MEN AND THAT CONTINUATION OF THE FEUD ONLY SERVED ISRAEL. HOWEVER, HANI AND KHALED AL-HASAN, WHILE ADMITTING THAT THE DISPUTE HAD TO BE EVENTUALLY RESOLVED, TOLD SYRIAN BUSINESSMAN THAT FATAH COULD NOT ASK FOR A TRUCE NOW WHEN IT WAS SO OBVIOUSLY LOSING. THEY ASSERTED THAT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO MURDER SEVERAL SENIOR IRAQI OFFICIALS BEFORE A TRUCE COULD BE ARRANGED. THEY TOOK THIS ATTITUDE EVEN THOUGH THEY CLAIMED THE SAUDIS, TO WHOM BOTH MEN ARE CONSIDERED CLOSE, WISH TO MEDIATE THE DISPUTE. BOTH BELIEVED IN THE THEORY THAT IRAQ IS COOPERATING WITH CHAMOUN TO HURT FATAH AND REFERRED TO AN ALLEGED TRIP BY DANY CHAMOUN TO THE IRAQI EMBASSY IN ROME TO RECEIVE A LARGE PAYMENT FOR HIS FATHER'S PARTY.

4. COMMENT: THE HASAN BROTHERS ARE HARDLY CONSIDERED WILD
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RADICALS WITHIN THE PLO AND THEY, THEMSELVES, ARE LIKELY TARGETS OF IRAQ'S WRATH IF THE CURRENT ROUND OF ASSASSINATIONS CONTINUE. THEIR DESIRE "TO EVEN THE SCORE" INDICATES THAT DESPITE THE OBVIOUS DETRIMENT TO BOTH SIDES THE KILLINGS MAY CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME UNLESS COOLER HEADS SOON PREVAIL. THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH SYRIA MAY BE WILLING TO SUPPORT FATAH IN ALL OF THIS IS UNCLEAR BUT MAY BE A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE EXTENT TO WHICH FATAH WILL GO IN PURSUING REVENGE. SEELYE
UNQUOTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PALESTINIANS, REPRISALS, DEATHS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE203811
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MACASEY:DWL
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X4
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780329-0633
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780872/aaaacikq.tel
Line Count: 104
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d0d98264-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1764590
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FATAH WANTS TO EVEN THE SCORE WITH IRAQ
TAGS: PEPR, IZ, PLO
To: BAGHDAD
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d0d98264-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014